

the

GREENWICH VILLAGE ORCHESTRA

BARBARA YAHR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2016 | 3:00 PM | WASHINGTON IRVING AUDITORIUM



2016-2017

30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Greenwich Village Orchestra is proud to be celebrating our milestone 30th season! For those of you who have been attending our performances for almost three decades, you have surely noticed how the orchestra has grown and evolved into the fine group of dedicated musicians you will hear today. The GVO loves rehearsing great music from the orchestral repertoire, but what we love most is performing for a live audience; that is how music comes to life. It's another way of saying that without you, it just wouldn't be any fun.

Yours,



Barbara Yahr
Music Director and Conductor

Established in 1986, the GVO is a symphony orchestra composed entirely of volunteers. By day, we are accountants, artists, attorneys, carpenters, editors, physicians, professors, programmers, psychologists, retirees, scientists, secretaries, teachers, and writers. As musicians, we are dedicated to bringing the best possible performances of great music to our audiences and are committed to serving the community while keeping our ticket prices affordable.

Keep the Music Playing: Support the GVO!

The GVO operates on a lean budget — our concerts would not be possible without generous donations from our audiences and our musicians. A gift of any amount enables to the orchestra to:

- Hire our exquisite Music Director, Barbara Yahr;
- Attract the most talented soloists performing in NYC today;
- Perform outreach concerts in hospitals and community centers;
- Develop and enhance our *Together in Music* initiative, which makes music accessible to children and families with special needs.

Become an integral part of GVO's music making today by making a contribution to the continued success of the GVO. Online: <http://www.gvo.org/support> Mail to: **Greenwich Village Orchestra, P.O. Box 573, New York, NY 10014**

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PROGRAM

Sunday, November 6, 2016 at 3:00 p.m.

Barbara Yahr, Music Director and Conductor

Imri Talgam, piano

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Lieutenant Kijé Suite

- I. Birth of Kijé
- II. Romance
- III. Kijé's Wedding
- IV. Troika
- V. Kijé's Funeral

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*

- Montagues and Capulets
- Masks
- Romeo and Juliet
- Death of Tybalt

— Intermission —

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

- I. Moderato
- II. Adagio sostenuto
- III. Allegro scherzando

Imri Talgam, piano

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Flash photography is not permitted during the performance.



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

SERGEI PROKOFIEV - *LIEUTENANT KIJÉ SUITE*

Paul I was Tsar of all the Russias from 1796 until 1801. He grew up convinced that his mother, Catherine the Great, had arranged the murder of his father, Tsar Peter III. Paul, whose reign the historian Leo Loewenson has characterized as one of “frenzied despotism,” shared with his father an unhealthy passion for militarism on the Prussian model. His brief time upon the throne came to an end when some of his own officers broke into his palace and killed him, but it lasted long enough to cause much misery and also to bring into being a body of underground and semi-underground satirical literature.

This is the world portrayed in Yuri Tynyanov’s *Lieutenant Kijé*, a tale of military bureaucracy gone berserk. By a slip of the pen, a clerk introduces a certain Kijé into the system, and once Kijé is on the books, no one dares or even knows how to take him out again. And so it is that the non-existent Kijé receives a commission as lieutenant, marries (for which he receives an allowance), retires, and ultimately goes to his reward.

In 1932, Prokofiev was approached about writing a score for a *Lieutenant Kijé* film to be directed by A.V. Feinzimmer. The composer had left Russia in May 1918, six months after Lenin had seized power. He lived first in the United States, and then in Paris. The Russians, who had lost a lot of good brains in and after the Revolution, were eager to get Prokofiev back. The courtship was skillful, slow, and successful. Prokofiev was careful and took time to make up his mind. In 1936, Prokofiev took up permanent residence in the Soviet Union. The opportunity to work on a film was a significant part of the bait. Prokofiev was fascinated by the movies, and his contributions to Eisenstein’s *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1942-45) were magnificent contributions to the history of film.

Prokofiev wrote the *Lieutenant Kijé* music straddling the border. He worked on the film score in Paris, but the concert suite, whose preparation entailed considerable reorganization as well as a new orchestration, was the first major work he undertook in the Soviet Union. Comments about the film are vague and contradictory. But the Suite lives on, and it has become one of Prokofiev’s most popular scores.

When he first returned to Russia, Prokofiev saw his mission as writing “light-serious music, primarily melodious, written in clear, yet original terms.” He moved quickly to a less radically populist position, but *Lieutenant Kijé* is a convincing realization of that initial recipe. We know also that he wrote this music with great enjoyment. Like the Classical Symphony of 1917, Kijé is affectionate stylistic pastiche, the point of takeoff here being the public music—military marches, sentimental popular songs, and so forth—of the era of Paul I. A distant cornet softly summons our attention, and to a jolly fife-and-drum music, rising soon to a

big-band climax, the future lieutenant is born. A moist Romance with saxophone solo, a pompous wedding procession, a jingling evocation of troikas bearing their well-bundled travelers through the snow, and music for Kijé's death and burial evoke for us the way stations of the mythical officer's life. Toward the end there is much reminiscence, and the music comes to a close with the same distant call with which it began.

—Michael Steinberg 2015

SERGEI PROKOFIEV - *ROMEO AND JULIET*

Prokofiev composed the score for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1935 for the Leningrad Theatre of Opera and Ballet, but the music became known through concert performances of suites the composer arranged well before the first staging in Russia by the Kirov Ballet, which, with choreography by Leonid Lavrovsky, occurred in 1940. The score is little short of miraculous. With impressive economy of means, without ever resorting to inflated emotionalism, Prokofiev conjures in sound every circumstance, character, and mood. The musical pictorialism is endlessly intriguing, the musical footprints clearly recognizable.

Montagues and Capulets. An angry dissonance suggests the eventual tragedy. The arrogance of the feuding families is pictured in the long striding steps of the string theme and the horns' haughty counter-theme. A contrasting middle section, which is Juliet's first dance with Paris, her parents' choice of a suitor for her, has the colorful shadings of harp, triangle, tambourine, snare drums, and glissando violas accompanying the sinuous flutes.

Masks. Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio, disguised, appear outside the Capulets' (Juliet's) house as guests arrive for a ball. The exuberant music reflects the spirited antics of the three friends.

Romeo and Juliet [The Balcony Scene]. For what is probably the best-known scene in all of Shakespeare, Prokofiev conjures a magical mood of silvery midnight. The music rises to a level of impassioned ardor, but always remains luminous, exalted. The mind's eye is led to an idealized vision of the two young lovers.

Death of Tybalt. Romeo avenges his friend Mercutio, who has just met death at the hand of Tybalt. This is the wedding day of Romeo and Juliet, and Romeo, at first reluctant to engage in battle, now slays the murderer of Mercutio. The dueling music swirls, careens and lunges dizzily; Tybalt's death agonies are intensified by fifteen throbbing timpani and woodwind punctuations. The fallen Tybalt's body is borne away as a searing theme intones the present tragedy and the larger one to come.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF - PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2

Though he was born before the last quarter of the 19th century began, Rachmaninoff was essentially a figure of the 20th century. Still, we can call him the last of the Russian Romantics; his sound was rooted in the 1800s and in the Russian nationalist composers dating back to Glinka and Tchaikovsky. He was also one of the greatest pianists of his day. With superlative technique and hands of enormous reach, he was ideally suited to perform works of power and Romantic sweep. Rachmaninoff focused on the piano in both composition and performance. Of his three concertos, the second is both the most popular and the most admired among critics. This is the composition that made his reputation.

Composed between the autumn of 1900 and the spring of 1901, it followed by three years the dismal reception of Rachmaninoff's first symphony, which proved a setback to his musical ambitions. Long troubled by clinical depression, Rachmaninoff benefited from excellent medical care and the support of friends and colleagues, who encouraged him to rededicate himself to piano composition. It was good advice, and helped him to work free from a creative stasis. In fact, while many concertos are dedicated to the soloists who premiered them, this one is dedicated to Rachmaninoff's physician, Nikolai Dahl.

It was the success of this concerto that made him a celebrity in America, a virtuoso pianist performing his own virtuosic compositions. With his impressive technique, Rachmaninoff was ideally suited to perform his own piano works. Listening to his concertos, we sense the perfect match between his physical gifts as a soloist and his style as a composer: These are compositions of dynamic extremes and singing melodies that require both power and speed. The aural effects are spectacular, requiring a huge note span, blinding dexterity, the ability to delineate multiple voices, and the control to delineate subtle gradations in tempos and dynamics. Through all of that, Rachmaninoff requires the pianist to spin a silken cocoon of sound that is voluptuous and quintessentially Romantic.

No one combines musical intimacy and sensuality with grand, even monumental sound the way Rachmaninoff does. One can hear the brooding depressive as well as the ardent romantic in every bar. In the first movement, marked moderato and written in C minor, an opening of intense foreboding builds through a series of powerful, chiming chords by the soloist. As the tension builds to a breaking point, the piano breaks into a sweeping main theme that is taken up in the violins. From this moment on — indeed, from the initial sounds of the piano's lone voice in the concerto's introduction — this is a hugely scaled musical statement that balances sweeping, melancholy phrases with melodies that express the sweetness and pain of romantic yearning. When a rolling theme emerges, its march

tempo gives it the quality of an inexorable machine, with only the solo piano to challenge it.

Slow chords in the strings open the second movement, an adagio that moves from C minor into E major. While the piano delineates a theme through fleet, poetic arpeggios, the overall mood remains melancholy, with a short exchange between orchestra and piano developing the movement's motifs. Yet this tinge of sadness does not overwhelm, perhaps balanced by the sense of romance and melodic richness. The concerto's songful quality, which gave rise to two Frank Sinatra tunes based on the first movement alone ("I Think of You" and "Ever and Forever"), takes full flight in the lush, gorgeous third movement, marked allegro scherzando. This movement is built around a melody that could be the distilled essence of romance, and that forms the basis of the song "Full Moon and Empty Arms." It has been excerpted in dozens of movies to convey the exquisite pleasure of love anticipated...and the exquisite pain of love unfulfilled.

The concerto ends in a flourish of virtuosity and optimism. The last movement, an allegro, opens with an introduction that moves away from the previous movement's E major, where the music was lush but the emotions lingered in an atmosphere of twilit moodiness. To close, it transitions from C minor to C major with ever-increasing tension and energy. The final thematic statements and coda are resolved in C major, in a loud and ecstatic finale.

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Sophia Saunders-Jones

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BARBARA YAHR

Now in her fifteenth season with the GVO, Music Director Barbara Yahr continues to lead the orchestra to new levels of distinction. With blockbuster programming and internationally renowned guest artists, the GVO under Barbara's baton, has grown into an innovative, collaborative institution offering a rich and varied season of classical music to our local community.

A native of New York, Ms. Yahr's career has spanned from the United States to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her previous posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Munich Radio Orchestra, Resident Staff Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony under Maestro Lorin Maazel and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as a guest conductor with such orchestras as the Bayerische Rundfunk, Dusseldorf Symphoniker, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Janacek Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, and the National Symphony in Washington D.C. She has also conducted the orchestras in Columbus, Detroit, Calgary, Chattanooga, Louisiana, Richmond, New Mexico, Lubbock, and Anchorage, as well as the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony, and the Chautauqua Festival Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared in Israel conducting in both Jerusalem and Eilat. As an opera conductor, she has led new productions in Frankfurt, Giessen, Tulsa, Cincinnati, Minnesota and at The Mannes School of Music in NYC. Most recently, she has coached the actors on the set of the Amazon Series, *Mozart in the Jungle*, and she conducted the season opener of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra in October 2016.

Ms. Yahr is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Middlebury College where she studied piano and philosophy. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music where she studied with Max Rudolf and an MM in Music Theory from the Manhattan School of Music. She was a student of Charles Bruck at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine.

A central focus of Ms. Yahr's career has been her commitment to finding new ways to reach a broader population with music. This path ultimately led her to pursuing an MA in Music Therapy at NYU and training at the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy in NYC. Her pioneering, community music therapy project, Together in Music, brings orchestral music to the special needs community with uniquely interactive programs presented annually by the GVO.

Barbara is married to Dr. Alexander Lerman and has two adult step children, Abe and Dania, and a 14 year old son, Ben.



IMRI TALGAM

A versatile performer of both contemporary as well as traditional repertoire, Imri Talgam has played throughout the world.

His recent appearances include venues such as Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Salle Pleyel, KKL Lucerne, Alice Tully hall and Kiev's Ukraine Palace, both as soloist and in collaboration with ensembles and chamber groups, including among others Ensemble Modern, the Israeli Contemporary players, Novus ensemble and the Croatian Radio-Television orchestra.



Talgam is the winner of the 11th Concours International de Piano d'Orléans, in which he received 1st prize, as well as the Denisov prize and the Claude Helffer prize. Following the competition, Talgam has toured widely in France, Russia and Argentina, performing recitals combining both contemporary works and traditional ones.

Talgam's playing has been featured in broadcasts by the Israeli radio company, as well as by the Deutschlandfunk Cologne. Most recently, his debut CD of works by Nancarrow, Kagel, Stockhausen and Furrer was released by Solstice to great critical acclaim. During 2016, Talgam will be artist-in-residence at the Royaumont foundation.

After graduating from the Tel-Aviv University in the class of Emanuel Krasovsky, Talgam studied with Matti Raekallio at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hannover. His studies (M.Mus) concluded with Raekallio and Robert McDonald at the Juilliard School of music in 2012. During 2012/13, Talgam has performed as pianist of the Ensemble Modern Academy in Frankfurt.

Along with his musical activities, he has studied Philosophy in both the Tel-Aviv University and Columbia University. As of 2013, Talgam pursues a doctoral degree at the City University of New York under Ursula Oppens and Matti Raekallio alongside his international concert tours.



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